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Objections to Asylum Seeker Centres: Individual and Contextual Determinants of Resistance to Small and Large Centres in the Netherlands

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Over the last 15 years, numerous asylum seeker centres (ASCs) have been founded in the Netherlands, often preceded and followed by neighbourhood unrest. In this contribution we show to what extent people object to the foundation of ASCs of different sizes. We set out to answer the question of which individual and contextual characteristics contribute to explaining objections to ASCs of different sizes. We use a large-scale survey of a representative sample of the Dutch population. To these individual level data we added contextual information related to the postal code and the municipality respondents live in. We find that objection to large centres is far more widespread than objection to small centres. Lower educated people object more strongly to centres, whatever the size. People with high incomes tend to object to large centres more strongly than people with low incomes. At the contextual level we find that in neighbourhoods with high values for real estate, people object more strongly to small centres. Municipalities with high percentages of low income populations object to small centres more strongly. The percentage of ethnic minorities at the postal code or municipality level is not related to objection to centres, whereas the actual presence of an ASC in the neighbourhood decreases objections.

Introduction

In the 1990s, the Netherlands was one of the European countries with the highest number of asylum seekers per inhabitant. Only recently has the Netherlands dropped in the rankings, leaving the leading role to Austria, Belgium, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom (UNHCR, 2002). Particularly in 1993 and 1994, Dutch society had been faced with an ever growing number of people knocking on the door, who had to be provided with accommodation during the period needed by the authorities to decide on their admittance (Figure 1). Asylum issues dominated both the public and political discussion, fuelled by the disorganization of the sheltering: authorities turned out to be unable to handle the largest inflow in 1994. In 1995, however, the numbers decreased strongly for a short time (Meloen *et al.*, 1998) and the subject became less debated. Figure 1 shows that media attention paid to asylum issues followed the actual number of asylum requests.

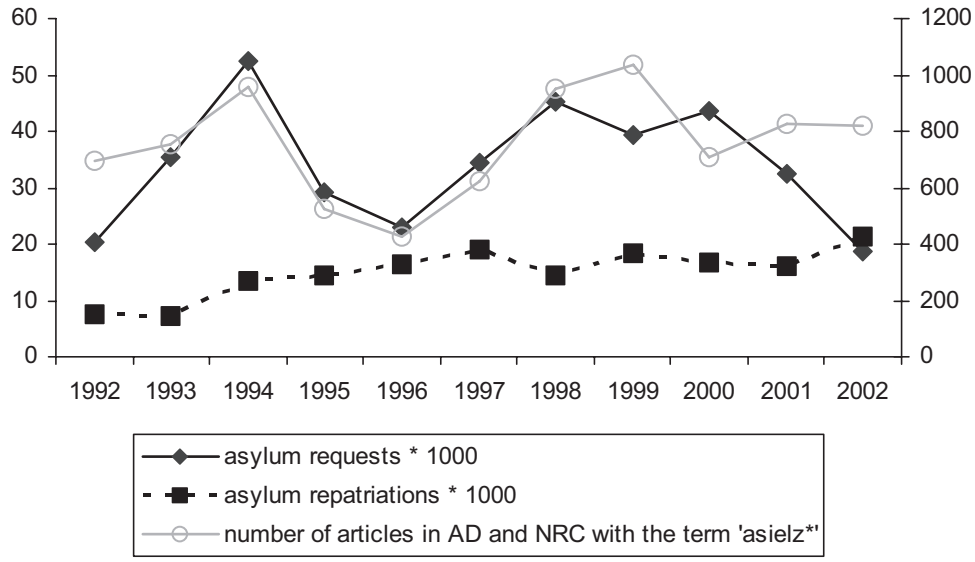

Figure 1 Annual number of asylum requests and asylum repatriations (×1000) and the number of articles on asylum issues in two Dutch newspapers 1992–2002. Source: CBS statline (2004) and LexisNexis Academic (2004)

In the late 1990s the number of asylum seekers increased strongly again, almost to the level of 1994, and asylum issues, again, became highly controversial. The government was faced with packed centres due to the lengthy time taken by asylum procedures and a halting circulation of asylum seekers with a claim to regular housing. In 2000, the new 'Aliens Act' was introduced by the government as 'strict but fair'. This act was aimed at speeding up asylum procedures and, moreover, at decreasing the number of asylum seekers. Nevertheless, 41 new centres opened doors for asylum seekers in 2000. It was not until 2002 that the Ministry announced the future closing of centres, due to increasing numbers of repatriations and declining numbers of asylum requests (Figure 1). From 1989 to 2001, a total of 540 asylum seekers centres (ASCs) had been opened (Figure 2; COA, 2004), often accompanied by neighbourhood unrest (Meloen *et al.*, 1998).[1]

Contentious opinion to restrict the numbers of asylum seekers was quite widespread, that is, latently under the social surface. Manifest protest, however, came to the social surface only in communities where ASCs actually opened, generally considered, at least by the political elite, to be a Not In My Back Yard (NIMBY) phenomenon. One of the most memorable protests was witnessed in rural Kollum, where an information evening on the future foundation of an ASC resulted in a fight and a march joined by extreme right-wing splinters. Another manifestation of protest was shown by rich people in the village of Vught, who bought a building allocated for asylum refugees, to prevent their coming. Latent protests were more numerous, we suspect. Arguments to protest against ASCs often boiled down to the social burden that relatively large ASCs would put on a small (rural) population. The foundation of an ASC and the presence of refugees was often accompanied by fears of increasing crime rates and devaluation of real estate. On the other hand, the foundation of ASCs was sometimes also followed by spontaneous actions to welcome asylum seekers (Meloen *et al.*, 1998). Such events, however, were hardly ever reported in the media.

Questions

Objections to ASCs have previously been documented by means of case studies (Meloen *et al.*, 1998; Poland, 2001; Schmeits, 2003). With small local surveys, manifest objections to opening of ASCs have been described. Virtually no attention has been paid, however, to the more latent objections to ASCs of various size. We consider such latent objections to ASCs to be another instance of ethnic exclusionism; just like avoidance of social contact with ethnic outgroups (Hagendoorn, 1995), support for ethnic discrimination (Coenders and Scheepers, 1998), opposition to integrated housing

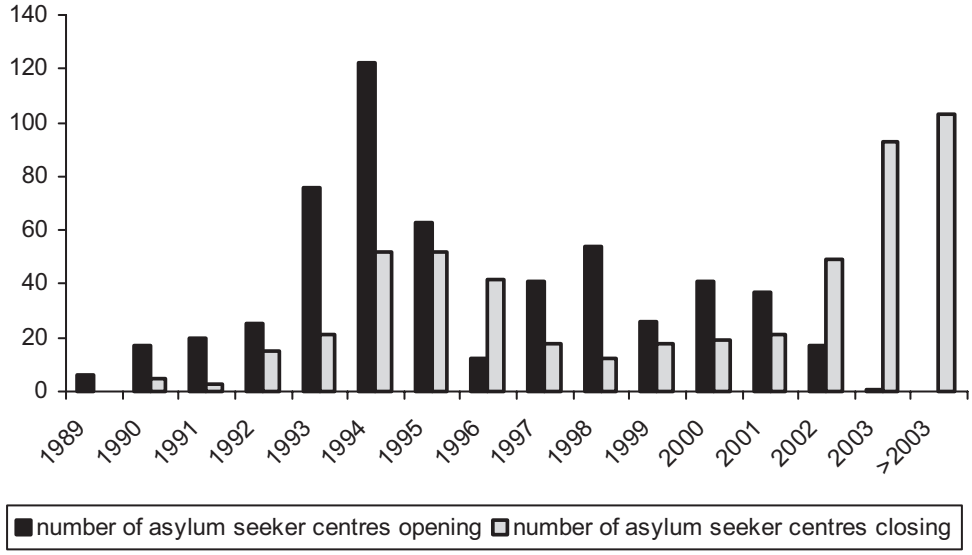

Figure 2 Number of asylum seeker centres opened and closed 1989–2003. Source: COA (2004)

(Oliver and Mendelberg, 2000), resistance to schools with allochthonous pupils (Schuman *et al.*, 1997; Coenders *et al.*, 2004) or the denial of civil rights to legal out-groups (Scheepers *et al.*, 2002a). The general explanations proposed for specific phenomena related to ethnic exclusionism, then, can also be studied for objection to ASCs.

Objection to ASCs may, however, be regarded as a special case of ethnic exclusionism. On the one hand, asylum issues have for a long time appealed to humanitarian compassion and helping people in need, which may have become somewhat obsolete, whereas, on the other hand, these people in need of help are placed in centres often in people's backyard, which apparently has created a social dilemma for many Dutch people. Therefore, it is all the more interesting to test whether the same social categories of less privileged people in previous research found to be more exclusionist also object more strongly to the foundation of ASCs. Considering the NIMBY character of the ASCs, we propose to test to what extent more privileged people also object to ASCs. First, we set out to answer the question to what extent people object to ASCs of varying sizes. Second, we consider both micro level (individual level characteristics) and macro level (municipality and postal code level characteristics) determinants to answer the question on the decisive determinants of objections to ASCs. Third, we take into account the actual presence of ASCs amongst other contextual characteristics. Fourth, we also want to answer the question of what determines people's different reactions to the foundation of a small versus a large centre in their neighbourhood.

Theories and Hypotheses

Differences between social categories in their attitudes towards immigrants have often been explained by classic versions of ethnic competition theory referring to threatened interests of these categories (Coser, 1956; Blalock, 1967). The general propositions are that people, first, who are considered to actually compete with immigrants over scarce resources or, second, who are considered to perceive competition with immigrants over scarce resources – either economic, social or cultural resources – often respond with antagonistic attitudes towards those immigrants (Levine and Campbell, 1972; Sherif and Sherif, 1979; Olzak, 1992; Quillian, 1995; Scheepers *et al.*, 2002a; Semyonov *et al.*, 2002; Raijman and Semyonov, 2004). Consequently, these theories propose that particularly those social categories, i.e. less privileged people, who are more likely to be confronted with ethnic minorities in the course of their work or their daily lives, resist more strongly to the presence of immigrants. *If it were not for* the objections to (small or large) ASCs that we focus on, we would straightforwardly derive from these propositions that more privileged people, such as those with a higher education and

those with higher incomes, would be less exclusionist toward immigrants. However, since we focus on objections to ASCs possibly posing social dilemmas as explicated above, the matter might be more complicated for respectively more privileged people.

Individual Characteristics

Let us start from the perspective of ethnic competition theory with the views of less privileged people. They might consider asylum seekers living in ASCs, although they are formally not allowed to work while their asylum requests are handled, to be potential competitors for scarce *economic resources* in the near future, after their legal admittance to the country. Such perceptions of collective ethnic threat may 'live' among less privileged people because the average educational level of asylum seekers is lower than the level of the Dutch autochthones (Gijsberts, 2004). These perceptions might drive objections of less privileged people to asylum seekers both in small and large ASCs, though we expect reactions to be somewhat stronger in cases of large ASCs. Hence, we propose to test the hypotheses that the lower people's education and the lower their income, the stronger their objections to ASCs. Moreover, we expect manual workers to object more strongly to ASCs than professionals. These differences are expected to be due to perceptions of collective ethnic threat.

From the perspective of more privileged people, the presence of ASCs might be considered, in line with another dimension of ethnic competition theory, to be a potential source of conflict as the ASCs might decrease the *social and cultural resources* of their neighbourhood or municipality. People living in ASCs could be perceived to mismatch the social status of privileged people. Previous research (Coenders *et al*., 2004) showed that higher privileged people are more in favour of the preservation of social status and power relations and show more resistance to levelling. In this respect, the more privileged higher status people may have more to lose than the less privileged people to whom a social status somewhat similar to ethnic minorities may be attributed. However, we expect differential reactions: the larger the ASC, and hence the more socially mismatching refugees are possibly around, the more the social and cultural resources of the social context would decrease for privileged people.

Moreover, many privileged people may fear the devaluation of real estate strongly related to social status, due to the founding of an ASC. This belief is widespread (Çankaya, 2002), despite the fact that there appears to be no relationship between the foundation of an ASC and either the prices for real estate or with the number of days that houses are for sale (Theebe, 2001). The perception of devaluation of real estate due to an ASC, even though it is a misperception, will induce objections to ASCs among house owners (54% of the Dutch) who tend to have, on average, higher incomes. People may expect a stronger devaluation effect from a large ASC which may be detrimental to their self-interests. Hence, we propose to test the hypothesis that privileged people, i.e. people with a higher educational level or a higher income object relatively more strongly to a large ASC than to a small ASC, as compared to the objection of lower educated people or people with a low income.

Another way of stating these hypotheses on differences between less and more privileged categories is that the effects of, e.g., education and income are bigger regarding objections to a small ASC than regarding objections to a large ASC. The logic behind these hypotheses is that in cases of small ASCs, objections will be more strongly prevalent among less privileged people rather than among more privileged people; whereas in cases of large ASCs, both less and more privileged people will tend to object more strongly, reducing differences between both categories, which will be (statistically) reflected in less strong parameter estimates.

Next to differences between these socio-economic categories, differences could be expected between religious and non-religious groups. Scheepers *et al*. (2002b) provided evidence that different dimensions of religiosity are differently related to prejudice. They showed that people more frequently attending church, are more strongly prejudiced. However, attitudes toward asylum seekers living in ASCs are quite different from attitudes towards immigrants in general. Dutch religious people could regard helping asylum seekers as their task 'to care about others as about yourself', deduced from the Biblical story on the merciful Samaritan. Actually, spontaneous actions to welcome asylum seekers to a community were often seen to be led by religious people. We therefore propose to test the hypothesis that people attending church services more often, object less strongly to ASCs, whatever the size, than people attending church less or never.

Contextual Characteristics

Resistance to immigrants has often been studied in the American situation. Researchers have studied resistance amongst whites against blacks as a function of the proportion of blacks in schools and neighbourhoods

(Blalock, 1967; Taylor, 1998; Oliver and Mendelberg, 2000). It was often found that higher proportions of blacks induced more widespread resistance among whites (Schumann *et al.*, 1997). It is this central proposition of increased contextual competition among ethnic groups provoking stronger interethnic tensions that is outlined by Blalock (1967) and Olzak (1992). This approach on the local level has also been followed in research pertaining to voting for extreme right-wing parties (Lubbers *et al.*, 2000), showing a higher likelihood to vote for the Vlaams Blok in municipalities with larger percentages of ethnic immigrants. So, increased visibility of ethnic immigrants would increase ethnic competition, inducing hostile and antagonistic reactions to these immigrants, shown to be intermediated by perceptions of collective ethnic threat (Scheepers *et al.*, 2002a). We therefore expect that a larger presence of ethnic immigrants within neighbourhoods or municipalities increases objections to (the foundation of) ASCs. Similarly, we expect, in line with ethnic competition theory, that the actual presence of an ASC in the neighbourhood or municipality increases objections to the foundation of a(nother) ASC, particularly when it concerns a large ASC.

Forbes (1997), however, formulated an alternative hypothesis, recently supported by Oliver and Wong (2003). He argued that, next to ethnic competition theory at a macro level, the contact hypothesis would work at the neighbourhood level. A general proposition is that unfamiliarity with groups increases suspicion toward, or fear of, such groups and vice versa, that opportunities for contact or at least exposure to different ethnic communities at the level of the neighbourhood might reduce suspicions toward these groups and counteract unfavourable attitudes (c.f. Oliver and Wong, 2003). Because contact with asylum seekers is more likely in areas where such an ASC is already present, we could expect objections to an ASC to be less strong in such areas.

In cases where the allocation of an ASC takes place in poorer or less privileged municipalities, the financial burden for the municipality could be regarded as a threat to investments in other communal projects. The interests of the population of poorer municipalities are possibly threatened by the foundation of an ASC to a stronger extent than those of the populations of richer municipalities.

From ethnic competition theory we furthermore derive that in neighbourhoods where the average prices for real estate are higher, people are more likely to expect that their houses would devalue more and therefore would object more strongly to the foundation of an ASC, particularly if it concerns a large ASC. Both the expected effects at the municipality level and the neighbourhood level may be explained by perceptions of ethnic threat or by individual economic threat.

Data and Measurements

To answer our research questions and test our hypotheses, we use data from 2000, collected in the longitudinal research program 'Socio-cultural developments in the Netherlands' (Eisinga *et al.*, 2002). In this program, developments considered relevant for Dutch society are monitored via face-to-face interviews with relatively large samples of the Dutch population. The sample is composed by a two-staged random procedure. In the first stage, municipalities are selected from the four regions of the country (North, East, West and South) together with the larger cities. In the second stage, a random sample of people between 18 and 70 years-of-age within the municipalities were drawn from the civil population register. The selected people received an introduction letter after which they were approached for an interview with trained interviewees. The response rate was 43.7% (1008 respondents). The sample showed a small under-representation of younger people, but no deviation in terms of gender or marital status.

Dependent Variable: Objection to Asylum Seeker Centres

To measure objection to the foundation of ASCs, three items were submitted to respondents, questioning to what extent they would object to the foundation in their neighbourhood of an ASC for (i) 50 asylum seekers (ii) 100 asylum seekers and (iii) 500 asylum seekers (cf. Bogardus, 1925). When the issue at stake is the foundation of a small ASC, respondents are about equally divided into those who object and those who do not object. When the foundation of a large ASC is at stake, almost 90% of the respondents show resistance.

These three items are strongly correlated (the smallest correlation is 0.50 between the first and third item) and form a cumulative probabilistic scale. However, we take into account the first and third items only to test whether we find differences between the explanations of both. We choose the extremes as the answering pattern differs most strongly and provides us with the possibility to test our expectations on differences in objections to small ASCs (50 asylum seekers) and large ASCs (500 asylum seekers).

Moreover, we computed a variable in which we categorized people who object to a large ASC for 500 asylum seekers only, and people who object to an ASC in both cases, i.e. irrespective of the size of the ASC. We found that approximately half of the respondents (51.3%) object to an ASC whatever the size. One-tenth of the respondents have no objection to an ASC, whatever the size. A large group has no objection to a small ASC, but does have objections to a large ASC, almost 40%. These descriptive statistics provide an answer to our first question, on the distribution of latent objections to ASCs: these latent objections are relatively widespread.

Independent Individual Characteristics

The *educational attainment* of respondents was measured by their highest level of completed education after primary education. This measurement varies from (1) no education completed after primary education to (7) completion of a university degree. *Social class* was coded as EGP-score for people currently having a job (Erikson *et al*., 1983). People outside the labour market were categorized on the basis of their current position: unemployed, students, housekeepers and retired people. *Net monthly income* was measured with the total earned net-income in a household, which we corrected for the number of adults living in the household.[2] Respondents' missing values (5.6%) on income were substituted by regression on age of respondent and partner, education of respondent and partner and social position of respondent and partner. We categorized the variable measuring *church attendance* from (1) once a week to (4) never. *Age*, *sex* and the *relative number of years the respondents lived at the address* were taken as control variables in the analyses. For the multilevel analyses we centred the variables of education, income, age and the relative number of years the respondent lived at the address on their mean.

Independent Contextual Characteristics

The data derived from the research on sociocultural developments in The Netherlands provide information on the respondents' municipality (CBS municipality code), level of urbanization and the four numbers of the postal code. Therefore, we differentiated between 92 municipalities and 476 postal code neighbourhoods. First, we included the postal characteristics as provided in the 'Kerncijfers postcodes 1999 [Core Statistics postal codes 1999]' by Dutch Statistics (CBS, 1999). It concerns the average value of houses (in 1000 guilders) in a postal area, as used to determine property taxes (*average housing tax-value*, in Dutch: WOZ-value). It runs from 68 (postal area in Rotterdam) to 400 (Blaricum) with an average of 177.5.[3] At the municipality level we included a measure of the *percentage of people with an income below the 40% average value* for the Netherlands.[4] As neither the measurement of house values nor the percentage of low incomes was linearly related to the endogenous variables, we transformed the ranges into new categories, and took them as ordinal variables into the analyses.[5]

The postal database also provides the (rounded) *percentage of non-western immigrants* in the population, which the CBS derives from the municipalities' basic administration.[6] For rural or industrial areas no percentages are provided. For these areas – in which 3.7% of the respondents live – we computed the number of non-western immigrants as zero. The percentage of non-western immigrants ranges from 0 to 67 per cent (CBS, 1999). The same indicator, but not rounded, has been used to determine the percentage of non-western immigrants at the municipality level, which runs from 0.4% (in Tubbergen) to 31.1% (in Amsterdam). As neither indicator was linearly related to the dependent variables, we categorized the variables, after which the assumption of linearity was met. The percentage of non-western immigrants at the postal code level was coded into the following six categories: '0% or 1%', 'from 2% to 5%', 'from 6% to 10%' 'from 11% to 15%' 'from 16 to 24%' and '25% or more'. At the municipality level we also divided into six categories, though with a smaller range at the end of the scale, as the percentages at this level are logically less extreme: 'less than 2%', 'from 2 to 5%', 'from 5 to 10%', 'from 10 to 15%', 'from 15 to 20%' and '20% or more'.

The COA (Central Organisation Asylum seekers) provided the *localization of the asylum seeker centres* that have existed since 1989. If the address of an ASC corresponded with the four-digit postal code of our respondents, we coded that an ASC is present. As the list provided by the COA also showed in which year the ASC opened or closed, we could precisely indicate the presence of the ASCs in the year 2000, where ASCs had existed before 2000 and where ASCs had opened after 2000. In our data, in 35 postal code areas an ASC was situated, in 22 areas an ASC had existed in the 1990s but not thereafter and in six postal code areas an ASC had been founded after 2000. As the number of respondents in a postal code area where an ASC was founded after 2000 is so low, we decided to leave this dummy-variable out of the analyses. Next to the coding at the postal code level, we also coded the presence of an ASC in a municipality. At the municipality level, in 52 out of the 92 municipalities in our data an ASC was present in 2000,

whereas in another five municipalities an ASC had opened after 2000. Only in seven municipalities had an ASC been present in the 1990s, but not thereafter. Finally, in 28 municipalities in our data no ASC has existed or been planned. These distributions actually underline the fact that ASCs have been, or currently are, in the back yard of many Dutch citizens.

The localization of the ASCs at the postal code level in our data is associated only with the level of non-western immigrants: in neighbourhoods with an ASC the percentage of non-western immigrants is *lower*. At the municipality level, we find a significant association only with the percentages of people with low incomes: in municipalities with an ASC in 2000, the percentages of people with low incomes are higher.

Intermediate Individual Characteristics

Perceptions of *collective ethnic threat* include Likert items referring to collective threat perceived with regard to ethnic minorities on socio-economic and socio-cultural issues for which the reliability (Cronbach's alpha) was 0.88. Perceptions of deterioration of the neighbourhood as well as the personal financial situation – without any reference to ethnic minorities – measure *individual economic threat*. The reliability of this set of items was 0.86.

We included four items concerning the preservation of existing social status and power relations, which were frequently used and are relatively reliable (0.77) (Peters and Felling, 2000). We measured aversion to levelling with three items that originally came from Middendorp (1979) and relate to the aversion to reducing income and class differences, which have formed a reliable set for many years (0.71) (Scheepers *et al.*, 1999). Some of these items actually resemble some of the measurements on social and economic equality proposed by Sidanius and Pratto (1993). Finally, as a control variable in the analyses we included attachment to the neighbourhood, measured with one item asking people whether they would be sorry if they had to leave their neighbourhood.

Analyses

To answer our next questions, on decisive (micro- and macro-level) determinants of objections to ASCs, we present results from multilevel analyses (Snijders and Bosker, 1999). We distinguished between the individual level (level 1), the postal code level (level 2) and the municipality level (level 3), following the nested structure of the data. First, for each of the two cases of objection to ASC we tested a zero-order model, providing variation between the levels of analyses (Model 1). Second, we included in Model 2 the individual independent characteristics. With this model we can test our hypotheses on differences between social categories regarding objection to ASCs. In the third model, the macro-level predictor 'presence of an ASC' is included, both at the postal code and at the municipality level. In Model 4, other contextual characteristics were included. Finally, we included the intermediate characteristics in Model 5. This last step in the analyses improves the model fit rather strongly as compared to the previous steps. In Table 1, these models are shown for objection to an ASC for 50 asylum seekers, Table 2 shows the results of the analyses with objection to an ASC for 500 asylum seekers. We find that variation in objection to ASCs is somewhat larger at the municipality level than at the neighbourhood level, both where it concerns a small or a large ASC (Model 1, Tables 1 and 2, respectively). The non-significance of the postal code variation can probably be attributed to the small number of respondents per postal code unit, which leads to a lower level of statistical power and increases the possibility of a type II error (Snijders and Bosker, 1999). As we are still interested in the effect-parameters of the neighbourhood level, we continue with the setup of a three-level model. Finally, we modelled a multinomial multilevel model, to test whether people who only object to a large ASC differ from either people who have no objection whatever the size or from people who object to an ASC no matter what the size.

Results

When comparing the results of the second model in Tables 1 and 2, we find evidence for the hypothesis that effect parameters of some background characteristics vary for objection to an ASC for 50 and 500 asylum seekers, respectively. There are three major differences between the models regarding determinants at the individual level.

First, the effect of education is almost twice as large in the model explaining objection to a small ASC ($b = -0.094$) compared to the model explaining objection to a large ASC ($b = -0.055$). This finding corroborates our hypothesis: differences in terms of objections to ASCs between educational categories are actually smaller in cases of large ASCs than in cases of small ASCs. However, the effect of education stays significantly negative, implying that the higher educated display (somewhat) less resistance irrespective of the size of the ASC.[7]

Table 1 Multilevel model on objections to an asylum seeker centre for 50 asylum seekers

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Intercept	2.613	2.666	2.763	2.824	2.697
Individual characteristics					
Education		−0.094**	−0.092**	−0.087**	−0.035**
Social position					
Higher professionals (reference)					
Lower professionals		−0.268**	−0.260**	−0.241**	−0.139
Routine non-manual workers		−0.084	−0.084	−0.081	0.018
Small property owners		0.093	0.094	0.086	0.076
Skilled manual workers		−0.179	−0.184	−0.198	−0.099
Unskilled manual workers		0.025	0.041	0.057	0.111
Unemployed/disabled benefit		−0.061	−0.057	−0.079	0.111
Other (housekeeping/retired/student)		−0.053	−0.051	−0.040	0.114
Income		0.004	0.005	−0.002	0.008
Church attendance					
Once or more a week		−0.123	−0.108	−0.151+	−0.195**
Once a month		−0.140	−0.138	−0.159	−0.188**
Once or twice a year		0.106	0.099	0.056	0.008
Never (reference)					
Sex (men)		0.036	0.020	0.019	−0.012
Age		−0.006**	−0.006**	−0.006**	−0.006**
Relative number of years at address		0.252*	0.296**	0.266**	0.206+
Contextual characteristics: neighbourhood					
Presence of an asylum centre					
No centre (reference)					
Centre present at time of interview			−0.261**	−0.279**	−0.289**
Centre present before 2000			−0.091	−0.151	−0.209+
Percentage of non-western immigrants				−0.050	−0.056
Average housing-tax value (WOZ)				0.088*	0.072*
Contextual characteristics: municipality					
Presence of an asylum centre					
No centre (reference)					
Centre opened after 2000			0.268	0.250	0.253
Centre present at time of interview			−0.109	−0.131	−0.045
Centre present before 2000			−0.160	−0.059	0.022
Percentage of non-western immigrants				−0.007	0.004
Percentage of people with low income				0.094**	0.079**
Urbanization					
Very strong				−0.036	−0.041
Strong				0.066	0.095
Moderate				−0.081	−0.022
Little				−0.164	−0.082
No					
Intermediate characteristics					
Collective ethnic threat					0.485**
Preservation of existing social relations					0.042
Aversion to levelling					0.014
Attachment to neighbourhood					−0.002
Individual economic threat					−0.061

continued

Table 1 *(continued)*

Variance components					
Level 3: Municipality	0.041**	0.022^{+}	0.013	0.002	0.001
Level 2: Four-digit postal code	0.036	0.025	0.022	0.017	0.002
Level 1: Individual	0.593**	0.547**	0.543**	0.539**	0.440**
Log-likelihood	2143.35	2046.94	2029.32	2002.08	1796.94
Improvement		96.41	17.62	27.24	205.14

*n = 888; **P < 0.01; *P < 0.05; $^{+}$P < 0.10*

The second difference between the models concerns the effect of income. In Table 1, it is not significant, indicating that lower and higher income categories do not differ in their objection to an ASC for 50 asylum seekers in their neighbourhood. But when people are exposed to a situation that 500 asylum seekers would be accommodated in their neighbourhood, people with higher incomes object more strongly which can be ascertained from Table 2. This finding corroborates our hypothesis. People in privileged situations, such as those with higher incomes, object more strongly to large ASCs than do less privileged people on low incomes.

The third difference between the explanatory models is found in the effect of age. The older people are, the less strongly they object to a small ASC in their neighbourhood. The effect of age disappears in explaining objections to an ASC for 500 asylum seekers, in Table 2. Similar findings between the models are that lower professionals show fewer objections than higher professionals to the foundation of an ASC, whereas the other social class categories do not differ significantly from the higher professionals in their objection. In spite of the fact that most of the differences between class categories do not reach significance, we would like to draw attention to the findings that most class categories object less strongly to ASCs, particularly large ones, than the higher professionals, which is consistent with the parameter estimate on income. The effect parameters of sex are, in both instances, not significant. The direction of the effects suggests that men object slightly more than women. It turns out that the longer people have lived at their address, the more they object to ASCs, whatever the size.

We would like to pay special attention to the findings that frequent church attenders object somewhat less to ASCs than non-attenders. Although the latter finding reaches significance only in Model 5 of Tables 1 and 2, it implies that we find somewhat more human compassion for asylum seekers living in ASCs among frequent church attenders, just as we hypothesized.

We find strikingly similar results regarding determinants at the contextual levels. In the third model in Tables 1 and 2, respectively, we can ascertain to what extent the actual presence of an ASC in a neighbourhood or municipality affects objections to the establishment of a centre. Instead of the hypothesis derived from ethnic competition theory, it seems that the contact hypothesis building on Oliver and Wong (2003) is supported: among people in neighbourhoods where an ASC was located at the time of the interview, objections towards both a small *and* a large ASC are significantly lower than among people who live in a neighbourhood where no such ASC was present. In neighbourhoods where an ASC had been present before 2000, but no longer existed at the time of the interview, objections to the foundation of a small ASC are also less widespread although they do not differ significantly from the reference category. Additionally, we find an effect of the presence of an ASC in a municipality, but it only reaches significance regarding objections to a large ASC. Again, the term is negative, once more implying that the presence of an ASC reduces widespread objection. Here we find a negative non-significant deviation from the people in municipalities where an ASC was located before 2000, but no longer exists. Additionally, we find that people who live in a municipality where an ASC had been opened in the years after the interview do not differ from the people who live in a municipality with no 'ASC history' at all, though the parameter is positive. The inclusion of the presence of an ASC decreases the municipality level variance to insignificance.

In the fourth model, we test the relevance of other contextual characteristics. The effect of the presence of non-western immigrants never reaches significance, implying that this hypothesis, derived from ethnic competition theory, is refuted. We also find that the effects of the presence of an ASC are not strongly confounded by the inclusion of other contextual characteristics. The effects of the presence of an ASC at the neighbourhood level change somewhat in their magnitude, but the

Table 2 Multilevel model on objections to an asylum seeker centre for 500 asylum seekers

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Intercept	3.450	3.628	3.735	3.782	3.663
Individual characteristics					
Education		−0.055**	−0.053**	−0.052**	−0.015
Social position					
Higher professionals (reference)					
Lower professionals		−0.344**	−0.329**	−0.324**	−0.213*
Routine non-manual workers		−0.166	−0.162	−0.158	−0.061
Small property owners		−0.188	−0.180	−0.187	−0.191
Skilled manual workers		−0.162	−0.159	−0.176	−0.079
Unskilled manual workers		−0.101	−0.080	−0.073	−0.011
Unemployed/disabled benefit		−0.253	−0.244	−0.261	−0.068
Other (housekeeping/retired/student)		−0.134	−0.127	−0.126	−0.068
Income		0.043*	0.043*	0.042*	0.042*
Church attendance					
Once or more a week		−0.126	−0.114	−0.139+	−0.178**
Once a month		−0.113	−0.114	−0.135	−0.159+
Once or twice a year		−0.027	−0.038	−0.057	−0.090
Never (reference)					
Sex (men)		0.047	0.031	0.032	−0.004
Age		0.000	0.000	0.001	0.001
Relative number of years at address		0.195+	0.227*	0.188+	0.139
Contextual characteristics: neighbourhood					
Presence of an asylum centre					
No centre (reference)					
Centre present at time of interview			−0.232**	−0.258**	−0.277**
Centre present before 2000			0.010	−0.022	−0.077
Percentage of non-western immigrants				−0.044	−0.041
Average housing-tax value (WOZ)				0.013	0.001
Contextual characteristics: municipality					
Presence of an asylum centre					
No centre (reference)					
Centre opened after 2000			0.153	0.160	0.152
Centre present at time of interview			−0.141*	−0.122	−0.051
Centre present before 2000			−0.100	−0.048	0.013
Percentage of non-western immigrant				−0.009	−0.005
Percentage of people with low income				0.025	0.015
Urbanization					
Very strong				−0.011	−0.011
Strong				−0.108	−0.069
Moderate				−0.067	0.009
Little				−0.076	0.000
No					
Intermediate characteristics					
Collective ethnic threat					0.372**
Preservation of existing social relations					0.090**
Aversion to levelling					0.017
Attachment to neighbourhood					−0.023
Individual economic threat					−0.080**

continued

Table 2 *(continued)*

Variance components					
Level 3: Municipality	0.034**	0.023^{+}	0.016	0.011	0.011
Level 2: 4-digit postal code	0.015	0.022	0.022	0.022	0.007
Level 1: Individual	0.506**	0.477**	0.472**	0.470**	0.410**
Log-likelihood	1978.32	1930.63	1915.00	1904.92	1760.95
Improvement		47.69	15.63	10.08	143.97

*n = 888; **P < 0.01; *P < 0.05; $^{+}$P < 0.10*

implications remain similar. The effect of the presence of an ASC at the municipality level on objection to an ASC for 500 asylum seekers becomes smaller and turns to non-significance, even though none of the other characteristics are significant (Table 2). In Table 1, however, we find two relevant characteristics affecting objection to a small ASC. First, in neighbourhoods where the average value for real estate is higher, objections are more widespread, in compliance with the hypothesis we proposed to test. Second, and also supporting our hypothesis, we find that in municipalities where the percentage of people with low incomes is larger, objections are more widespread.[8]

Next let us turn to the fifth model including the intermediate characteristics. We find that perceptions of collective ethnic threat are rather decisive with regard to objections to small as well as large ASCs, supporting our hypothesis. We find that the wish to preserve existing social status and power relationships also drives these objections but only reaches significance in case of objections to large ASCs. This is comprehensible since higher educated and people with higher incomes are more inclined to preserve existing social status and power relationships, and we already found that people with higher incomes object more strongly to large ASCs than people with lower incomes, and we also found that the negative effect of education is smaller with regard to objections to a large ASC. The effects of aversion to levelling and attachment to the neighbourhood never reach significance. The finding that perceptions of individual economic threat have a negative effect on objections to ASCs, significant in the case of objections to large ASCs, rejects our hypothesis. Including the intermediate characteristics in the equations actually reduces the effects of the average housing-tax value and the percentage of poor people in the municipality. Additional analyses including the intermediate characteristics one by one revealed that the effects of the average housing-tax value and the percentage of poor people in the municipality are explained foremost by perceptions of collective ethnic threat. Similarly, the effects of education and the relative number of years at an address are interpreted by including the intermediate characteristics.

Which Social Categories Approve of a Small ASC but Object to a Large ASC?

A comparison of the effects of Tables 1 and 2 provides some evidence for changes of respondents in their position on the scales, but does not indicate precisely which categories have no objection (at all) to an ASC for 50 asylum seekers, but do object to an ASC for 500 asylum seekers. Therefore, we take into account the constructed variable. In this variable we distinguished between people who do not object to an ASC whatever the size, people who only object to a large ASC for 500 asylum seekers, and people who object to an ASC in both cases, irrespective of the size of the ASC. With the differentiation between these categories, we perform multinomial logistic analyses (with multilevel analyses). The results are presented in Table 3. In this Table, we only present the results of the model including all individual characteristics and the presence of an ASC. Inclusion of the other contextual characteristics has led to estimation problems. The results present the likelihood of 'no objection to an ASC whatever the size' and 'objection to both a small and large ASC' versus 'objection to a large ASC, but not to a small ASC'. This latter category consists of the people who react differently to a large ASC and a small ASC. As this category is the reference category, we emphasize that the parameters of Model 3A should be interpreted as the likelihood of 'no objection whatever the size' versus 'objection to a large ASC, but not to a small ASC' and of Model 3B as the likelihood of 'objection to an ASC whatever the size' versus 'objection to a large ASC, but not to a small ASC'.

In Model 3A, we find that four parameters reach significance. First, the higher people's educational level, the higher the likelihood for them to be in the category of 'no objection whatsoever'. Second, when people's income increases, the likelihood to be in the category of

Table 3 Multinomial multilevel model on the likelihood of 'no objection whatever the asylum seeker centre (ASC) size' and 'objection whatever ASC size' versus 'objection to a large ASC, but not to a small one'

	Model 3A 'No objection whatever the size' (1) versus 'Objection to a large centre, but not to a small one' (0)	Model 3B 'Objection whatever the size' (1) versus 'Objection to a large centre, but not to a small one' (0)
Intercept	−2.412	0.291
Individual characteristics		
Education	0.130*	−0.258**
Income	−0.298**	−0.069
Church attendance		
Once or more a week	0.285	−0.098
Once a month	0.657+	0.030
Once or twice a year	0.097	0.411**
Never (reference)		
Sex (men)	0.331	0.233
Age	−0.005	−0.023**
Relative number of years at address	−0.221	0.680*
Contextual characteristics: neighbourhood		
Presence of an asylum centre in neighbourhood		
No centre (reference)		
Centre present at time of interview	0.301	−0.578**
Centre present before 2000	−0.495	−0.069
Contextual characteristics: municipality		
Presence of an asylum centre in municipality		
No centre (reference)		
Centre opened after 2000	a	0.221
Centre present at time of interview	0.956**	−0.224
Centre present before 2000	−0.025	−0.470

[a]*Not estimated, due to low number of respondents in category*
***P < 0.01; *P < 0.05; +P < 0.10*

'no objection whatever the size' decreases, and hence, the likelihood to react differently to a large ASC than to a small ASC increases. Third, people who go to church once a month have a somewhat larger likelihood to have no objection to an ASC whatever the size versus objection to a large ASC, but not to a small ASC, compared to people who never attend church. Fourth, we show that for people who live in a municipality where an ASC was present in 2000, the likelihood increases to have no objection to an ASC whatever the size versus objection to a large ASC, but not to a small ASC, compared to people who live in a municipality where no ASC is located.

When we turn to the third column of Table 3 (Model 3B), where people who have objections to an ASC whatever the size, are compared to people who object to a large ASC but not to a small one, we find other characteristics of importance. Income now has no significant contribution, whereas age, education and the years at an address do. For young people, lower educated people and people longer at an address (compared to older people, higher educated people and people more recently at an address), the likelihood is higher to object an ASC whatever the size versus objection to a large ASC, but not to a small one. People who attend church only once or twice per year also have a larger likelihood to object to an ASC whatever the size than people who never attend church. Finally, we find once more an effect of the presence of an ASC in the neighbourhood. People who have such an ASC in their neighbourhood have a smaller likelihood to object to an ASC whatever the size.

Summary and Discussion

In this paper we have focused on the latent objections to the foundation of ASCs, small and large centres, existing

under the social surface of the Netherlands. We considered this dimension of ethnic exclusionism particularly interesting because it refers to more than just out-groups, distinguished from the in-group and treated with contempt if not hostility (cf. Levine and Campbell, 1972). Instead, asylum seekers are out-groups who have fled from their countries of origin seeking help in other countries, asking for human compassion, often in the back yard of the Dutch since so many centres have been founded over the last decade. Yet we found, to answer our first question, that approximately nine out of ten people in the Dutch research population object to large ASCs whereas half of the research population object to a small ASC. These proportions of people objecting to ASCs certainly outnumber the proportions of people who actually manifested their protests on particular occasions, indicating that latent resistance to asylum seekers is far more widespread than manifest resistance.

As there are large differences in objections depending on the size of the ASC, we studied variation in effects of individual and contextual determinants, in order to answer our second and third question on decisive (micro- and macro-level) determinants. Building on ethnic competition theory, we expected people with a low educational level, people with low incomes and manual workers to object more strongly to the foundation of ASCs, regardless of the size. We found some evidence for this hypothesis, however, only for the lower educated. Lowly educated people object more strongly to the foundation of an ASC, irrespective of the ASC size. This negative effect of education turned out to be less strong for the foundation of a large ASC, indicating that differences between educational categories were smaller in cases of objecting to large ASCs as compared to objecting to small ASCs, just as we had hypothesized. Moreover, we found not that the lower income categories object more strongly to the foundation of a large ASC, but, instead, particularly the higher income categories do so, which actually supports our hypothesis on the differential effect of income on objections to small versus large ASCs. Although there is no evidence that real estate values actually decrease when an ASC is founded, the idea of house-devaluation is widespread. We found no evidence that perceptions of individual economic threat drive such objections. Instead, people's wish to preserve existing social status and power relationships turned out to drive objections to a large ASC. We interpreted this finding by proposing that the higher income categories fear a decrease of the social and cultural resources of their neighbourhood due to a (perceived) mismatch between their status and those of people living in ASCs, particularly when a large ASC would be located in their neighbourhood. More generally, we found that perceptions of collective ethnic threat drive objections to asylum centres quite decisively, just as such perceptions of threat have been shown to determine other instances of ethnic exclusionism, such as granting civil rights to legal migrants (Scheepers *et al.*, 2002; Raijman and Semyonov, 2004), supporting this crucial part of ethnic competition theory.

In neighbourhoods with higher values for real estate, people object more strongly to the foundation of a small ASC, irrespective of the municipality they live in. In these neighbourhoods people may fear a stronger devaluation of their housing property, inducing them to object more strongly to an ASC. On the municipality level, we found that in municipalities where relatively many people with low incomes live, objections are also stronger. This we might interpret as a reaction to a collective threat to the community's position, for which we actually found evidence.

From classic propositions of ethnic competition theory (cf. Blalock, 1967) we derived that a larger numerical presence of ethnic minorities at the neighbourhood level or at the municipality level would increase objections to the foundation of an ASC. However, we did not find such an effect. Instead, we found that the presence of an ASC decreases objections to such a centre: people who live in neighbourhoods where an ASC is located, have less objections to ASCs, irrespective of the question whether it concerns a small or large ASC. This evidence might be considered to support the contact hypothesis, as has been recently empirically supported by Oliver and Wong (2003) in quite different social contexts.

Comparing objections to a small ASC with objections to a large ASC, we found answers to our fourth question. Next to the differences in effects of education and income, we found a difference in the effect of age. Last but not least, we found quite consistent evidence that for people living in municipalities where an ASC was actually present, the likelihood increases to have no objections to an ASC, whatever the size. This may imply that after the societal unrest that has been witnessed, preceding and following the foundation of ASCs in the Netherlands, people have come to show their human compassion for these asylum seekers. In spite of the fact that we cannot actually test the relationship between actual interethnic contacts and interethnic antagonisms, this rather consistent finding may again lend support to the classic contact hypothesis. Exposure to different ethnic communities may counteract unfavourable attitudes, which in turn may reduce objections to the presence of minorities.

Notes

1. COA (Central Organization Asylum seekers, the deputy department of the Ministry of Interior Affairs, responsible for the allocation and housing of asylum seekers) had neither the budget nor time to build new asylum centres and hence was forced to rely on communities where buildings had become available, often (old) cloisters or vacation centres that were temporarily vacant. Instead of having clear policies with regard to the location of asylum centres, these centres have become more or less randomly distributed across the country over the course of time.
2. If two adults had to live from the income, we divided it by one and a half. This measure still correlated 0.88 with the uncorrected measure of net-income.
3. At the contextual level WOZ value negatively correlates with the percentage of non-western immigrants. It correlates moderately positively with the individual measurements of income and age, whereas a correlation with education is absent.
4. The CBS computes the number of income receivers with 52 weeks income that in 1998 had a disposable income below 26,500Dutch guilders as a rounded percentage of the total number of income receivers with 52 weeks of income. The drawn line of 26,500 guilders is the 40 per cent point of the national income distribution in 1998 (CBS, 2004) http://www.cbs.nl/nl/cijfers/buurt-in-beeld/toelichting-variabelen.html#inklaag.
5. The variable WOZ values was transformed into four categories (1, 'less than 125,000 guilders'; 2, '125–175,000 guilders'; 3, '175–225,000 guilders'; 4, 'more than 225,000 guilder'). Percentage of low incomes was transformed into five categories (1, 'less than 37.5%; 2, '37.5–38.5%'; 3, '38.5–41.5%'; 4, '41.5–42.5%'; 5, 'more than 42.5%').
6. The CBS counts as allochthoneous immigrants all persons from whom at least one parent is born abroad. Non-western immigrants are people who are born, or from whom at least one parent is born, in Turkey, Africa, Latin America and Asia, excluding Japan and Indonesia (CBS, 2004) http://www.cbs.nl/nl/cijfers/buurt-in-beeld/toelichting-variabelen.html#Allochtonen.
7. Additional analyses including a quadratic term of education and income did not provide other results.
8. These contrasting findings may lead to suspicions on interaction effects between the neighbourhood characteristic, i.e. average housing-tax value, and the municipality characteristic, i.e. the percentage of people with a low income. This interaction, however, turned out to be non-significant (not shown, available on request).

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